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Tracts

PROTEST OR REMONSTRANCE

OF

M. FIELD FOWLER,

AGAINST OPENING THE DOORS OF THE

PUBLIC LIBRARY, BOSTON,

ON THE LORD'S DAY.

For sale at Howard's News Agency, Post Office.

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BOSTON:
ROCKWELL & ROLLINS, PRINTERS,
122 WASHINGTON STREET.

1867.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY.

To the Honorable City Council of Boston:

The undersigned respectfully protests against the passage of the order proposing to throw open the doors of the Public Library on the Lord's Day. I have read the report of the joint standing committee in favor of the same, which is drawn up certainly with great ability, if not with insidious logic. I feel a high personal regard for the gentlemen who signed that report, and from their official position it is no doubt a document that will exercise a wide and important influence in this community, not only on this Public Library matter, but opens up incidentally all the other questions agitating the community on the observance of the Christian Sabbath, some of which are specially mentioned in the report, and its foundation, in fact, seems to me to rest on what are now considered by the Christian community as mischievous practices or customs, and demoralizing usages. The report says the *committee represent in their individual character the denominational views of the various sects of the Christian faith.* I confess nothing said in the whole report has "*wounded my feelings*" more than this assertion or assumption; and I should be very much astonished if any Christian sect or denomination in Boston should admit the assertion to be true, or confirm the premises on which the report is based. I, for one, repudiate it in toto, and consider it an insult to the church, or denomination to which I belong; and I believe that to be the sentiment of all evangelical Christian denominations in the City of Boston.

The report says, "It is the custom and an acknowledged convenience for the horse cars to run on Sundays in this

city." Admitting this to be true, so far as those who use them is concerned, does not prove it to be right or beneficial to the whole community, or sanctioned by the views of the Christian denominations.

According to the report, out of about 200,000 population in this city, not over one fourth, or 50,000, attend church on Sunday. Further it says: "The fact is, that a large proportion of our people, especially young men, seldom, or never, attend any church." This is certainly an admission that there are some very bad "customs" indulged in on Sunday by a great majority of the people. As the horse-cars are used on Sunday by only a very small proportion of the population, and probably they are mostly of the class just alluded to, that "custom" hardly justifies the deductions assumed by implication favorable to opening the Public Library! I doubt if the running of horse-cars on Sunday is sanctioned by anything like a majority of Christian worshippers, or even voters, of the city of Boston.

In the city of Baltimore, recently, with all the influence of Boston example eloquently urged by a clergyman representing the liberal Christianity of Boston, it was decided by only about 1,300 majority, out of 20,000 votes, in favor of Sunday cars. In Boston, last year, 1,072 men and 2,071 horses were employed and worked to their utmost capacity during the week, and then again on Sunday. This may be an acknowledged "convenience" to some folks, but the Christian heart that defends and applauds such a "custom" must be deplorably ignorant or blind to its evils and consequences on all sides. My experience and observations on this Sunday "custom" extends back to 1856, three years before the "discussion" of the Public Library question commenced, and it may therefore not inaptly be considered one of its children. Perhaps some may say it is illegitimate; but I think the horse-railroad is the mother of it, although there may be some doubts about the father, or paternal progenitor. I plead guilty to being one of the grandfathers, and have acknowl-

edged my shame a long time ago, and feel now that it is time to stop the propagation and generation of such evils, or "customs," by destroying the root, instead of cultivating it.

I certainly think it is a very slim and feeble argument for the "*conservators of the morals of the community*" to be forced upon, when they appeal to the example of the Merchants' Exchange, and other reading-rooms and clubs, to justify the City Government of this old and Puritanical City of Boston in keeping their reading-room open on Sundays! If His Honor the Mayor, or some one or more of the Council, should personally superintend, and hand out the "books, magazines, and papers," at the room, Sundays, it would be, I think, consistent, if not appropriate.

I have been the target for the sneers of a certain daily paper in Boston on the Sunday Car question. I asked them why they did not publish their valuable paper on Sunday afternoons, with "the thoughts of great and good men" to "inspire and ennable their readers;" but they have not yet answered my question, but are probably waiting for the Public Library to open. "As a question of practical morals" no doubt there are many in the community who would petition in favor of opening the public schools on Sunday, and back it up with stronger arguments than have been so far advanced in favor of opening the Public Library. The teachers do not work half so hard as the conductors and drivers of horse-cars on week days, and are much better paid. I question the need or propriety of keeping the clubs or merchants' reading-rooms open on Sundays. Although I am no fanatic, I don't think it is parallel with the laws of God and customs of our country. The New York Merchants' Exchange is never opened on Sundays; neither is the London Merchants' Exchange, which is the largest in the world, and has this inscription conspicuously on its front: "The earth and the fulness thereof are the Lord's," which struck me forcibly.

No institution, people, or government can expect God's blessing, if the Bible is to be believed as his "word," that

does not publicly acknowledge God in all their ways, and especially in remembering the **LORD'S DAY**, or **CHRISTIAN SABBATH**, to keep it holy. It is originally not only a law of creation from the dawn of time, but an act of **BENEDICTION** for the physical, intellectual, and moral constitution of our nature as it came from the hands of its Creator. The fourth commandment, like any other of the ten commandments, was written by the great **JEHOVAH**, not on paper, like the Pentateuch, but on tables of stone, the symbol of durability. It received the express sanction of **CHRIST** and his Apostles, who declared that the Gospel, far from overthrowing the law, establishes and fulfils it. Hence, it is called "a schoolmaster to bring to **CHRIST**," and we are "under the law to him." The forms of obedience may change, but virtue is unalterable; consequently, moral obligation is the same in its principle under the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian dispensations. And under whatever dispensations mankind may be placed, and whatever requirements the Creator may see fit to institute, man can never be released from the binding duties which originate in the very constitution of his nature. It would reflect on the character of **GOD**, who is unchangable, to suppose that under one dispensation he has prescribed a law which is at variance with the principles he has established under another. It is to place **DEITY** in opposition to **HIMSELF** and virtually to deny his perfections. The Jewish Sabbath rose with the Saviour from the grave as a new creation on the morning of the resurrection with the fulness of the gospel salvation, and descended with the **HOLY GHOST** from his exalted throne of glory, on the day of Petecost, to be observed as the Christian Sabbath or "**THE LORD'S DAY**" in his church to the end of time.

In conclusion, I would echo the truthful and eloquent sentiments in a pamphlet published by the New York Sabbath-Committee :—

"The day of holy rest, to a land bearing the Christian name, and to a republic based on equal rights, has the highest **CIVIL**

WORTH. Man needs it, *physically*, as a season when Labor may wipe off its grime, and breathe more freely after a week's exhaustion, and when Care shall slacken its hold upon the frame and the heart. Man needs it, *morally*, to rise by its aid out of engrossing secularities and materialism to the remembrance of his spiritual interests, his final account, and his eternal destiny. *Toil* needs it, to rescue its share of rest, and its season of devotion from the absorbing despotism of Capital ; and *Capital* needs it, to shield its own accumulations from the recklessness and anarchy of the imbruted and the desperate, and to keep its own humanity and conscientiousness alive. The *State* needs it, as a safeguard of the public order, quiet and virtue,—human laws becoming, however wise in form, effete in practice, except as they are based upon conscience and upon the sanctions of Eternity, as recognized voluntarily by an intelligent people ; and God's day cultivating the one and reminding us of the other. And in a *republic* more especially, whose liberties, under God, inhere in its virtues, the recognition — freely and devoutly, by an instructed nation — of God's paramount rights is the moral underpinning requisite to sustain the superstructure of man's rights ; and without such support from religion, — not as nationally established, but as personally and freely accepted, — all human freedom finally moulders and topples into irretrievable ruin.”

And if the City Council shall decide to open the Public Library reading-room on the LORD'S DAY, I hope they will buy a few hundred volumes of a work recently published by the New York Sabbath-Committee, entitled “THE SABBATH, viewed in the light of Reason, Revelation, and History, with sketches of its Literature, by the REV. JAMES GILFILLAN, Sterling, Scotland,” and put it on the tables for the use of visitors.

M. FIELD FOWLER.

BOSTON, June 3d, 1867.



